Beach, David N

Meanings of the Battle of Bennington

MEANINGS

—OF—

THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON.

ILLUSTRATED.

ADDRESS BY
DAVID N. BEACH.

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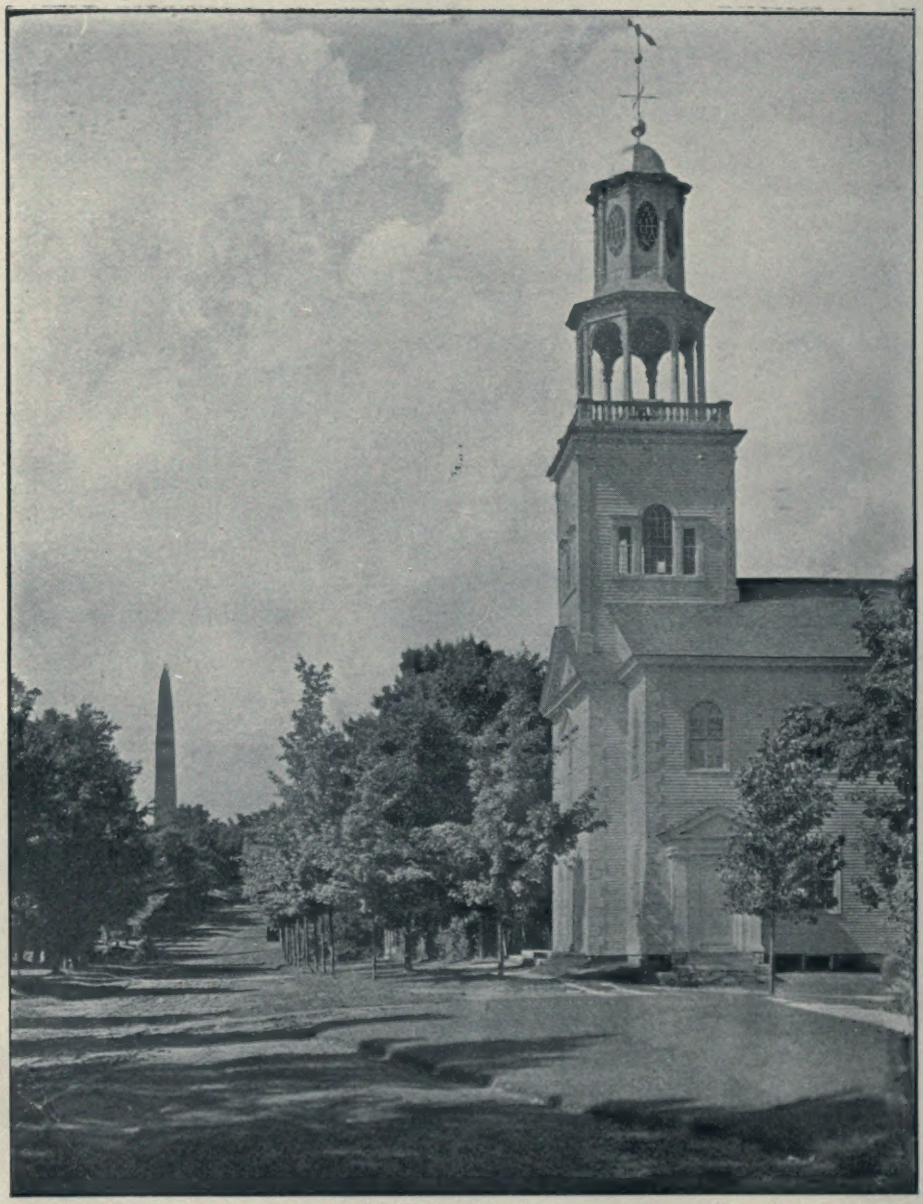

OLD FIRST CHURCH AND MONUMENT.

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MEANINGS OF THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON:

AN ADDRESS

On the One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Anniversary of the Battle,

At a Union Old Home Week Service held at the Old First Church, Bennington Centre, Vermont, Sunday Evening, August 16, 1903.

BY

DAVID N. BEACH,

President of Bangor Theological Seminary.

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MEANINGS OF THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON.

Almost at the precise moment when this Union Old Home Week Service began, there were arriving, one hundred and twenty-six years ago, at the Meeting House which stood near the middle of the Green in front of this edifice, the prisoners taken in Bennington Battle. The regular soldiers were under guard, but their Tory allies, as a mark of special indignity, were pinioned two and two.

At about the same time there were arriving at various Bennington homes their own soldier wounded.

To the Catamount Tavern, not far to the north of this edifice, there was borne, this same evening, the blanched and gory body of John Fay, son of the venerable Stephen Fay, Landlord of that famous hostelry; and to three other homes of Bennington the dead were also being borne. Stephen Fay had five sons in the Battle. Being informed that he was unfortunate in one of them, he inquired whether he had misbehaved or had deserted his post. When he learned the truth he thanked God that he had a son willing to give his life for his Country, and insisted on preparing the body for burial with his own hands.

Because this service coincides in time with the anniversary of such stirring events, I am asking you to think with me of the subject which has been announced.

I. WITHOUT FORM OR COMELINESS.

Perhaps no battle commensurate with the Battle of Bennington in its effect on human history, was ever so devoid of the circumstance or pomp of a great military achievement.

It was fought on a frontier. The neighborhood had been settled less than twenty years. The place of the battle had as yet no recognized name. There were there only a rough bridge and some straggling farm buildings built of logs. The territory was remote from the populous parts of the country, and distant from the centre of military operations. The Commander-in-Chief was never remotely near the battle. The Officer in Charge was commissioned only by New Hampshire. Less than ten days before the engagement he refused to obey superior officers who ordered him to march with his forces to the Hudson. For this, after the battle, but before the tidings of it arrived, Congress censured him. Then, when the news came, he was given a vote of thanks and promoted. Burgoyne said of him and of his men: "[They are] the most active and rebellious men on the continent, and [hang], like a gathering storm, on my left." They were "a gathering storm," indeed, and much more than that. They portended the speedy capture of himself and of his entire army. But they were without form or comeliness or beauty that any desired, until the world was startled by the audacity and splendor of their deed.

To turn to the men themselves, many of them were ununiformed. They fought in their shirt-sleeves. Nichols's men, when they fell upon Baum's rear from the northwest, wore a green twig in each hat. Hobart's and Stickney's men, when they stormed the Tory Breastwork from the

southeast, had cornhusks in their hatbands. Few of our men had bayonets. Some of them are said to have started for the battle carrying scythes. Most of them were raw militia. For many of them it was their first fight.

The fighting itself was sturdily independent. One of its participants, Jesse Field, told Gov. Hiland Hall that "after we passed the redoubt . . . every man seemed to manage for himself, and, being attached by chance to some squad, either under some officer, or without any, would attack every party that came in their way." And when Breyman came up with reinforcements from Burgoyne, Stark was so spent that he could hardly be roused to resist; but, as if they were only comrades, Seth Warner's alerter energy sufficed until Stark was re-aroused to his wonted intrepidity and was in full tilt again. In the celebrated phrase about Santiago, the Battle of Bennington "was a captain's fight."

No, the pomp and circumstance of a great military achievement were not in evidence that day.

II. THE BATTLEFIELD ITS OWN MAP.

As for the battlefield, a map of it, made by the enemy, and singularly accurate, has been preserved in fac-simile. Its excellence is indicative of and in keeping with the superior quality of the trained soldiery that day encountered.

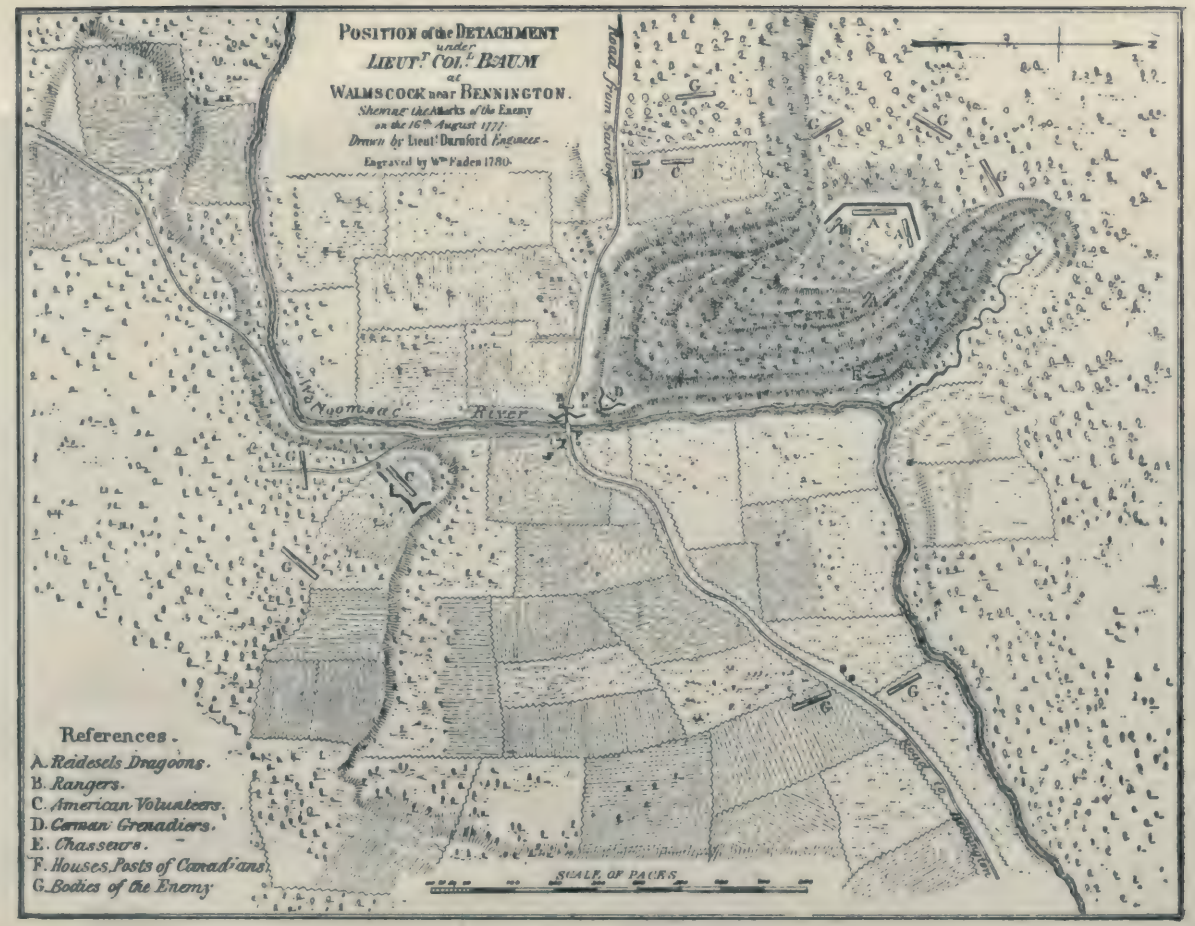
They were seasoned and brave veterans, the flower of Burgoyne's army. After their cannon were captured and our men swarmed within their works, they preserved their discipline, fired while their cartridges lasted, and then charged with sabres, Baum at their head and only yielding

when mortally wounded. After the surrender, he and the Tory Colonel Pfister, who was in a like case, were borne a mile and a half back along the road toward Bennington to a house near the roadside, died within twenty-four hours, and were buried near the house in unmarked graves. The house stood until after Sumpter, and an excellent photograph of it has been preserved.* Over Baum, in his dying hours, Capt. Samuel Robinson watched with the tenderness of a woman, and it is his testimony that "a more intelligent and brave officer he had never seen." Greek met Greek that day.

But, excellent though the map is, one hardly needs it. The magnificent topography is its own battle plan, done in relief. The Walloomsac here flows south. A high hill rises abruptly on its west bank. This hill is just north of the old road, which then as now crossed the stream by a wooden bridge. On this hill Baum fortified. Everyone ought to climb this hill in August, ascending through the yellow oats, the Timothy and the clumps of wild raspberry. When, from the top, you see the yet higher and more rugged hill to the north of it, you ask yourself, "Why, if it was to be a defensive fight, did not Baum fortify there?" But when you look south you perceive why he did not. For there is the road, and there is the bridge, and these determined the place of fortification.

The hill, too, is superb for defense. The river bank is so steep that it is its own parapet toward the east. You have only to throw up breastworks to the south, to the west and to the north. This Baum did. But, looking toward the bridge, you observe that your hill has a shoulder thrown out boldly toward that structure, partly cut into by the Railway

*One of these photographs is in the possession of Dea. Henry D. Hall, of North Bennington.



THE BATTLEFIELD.

This is an exact copy, reduced in size, of the map in Burgoyne's "State of the Expedition" with the exception of the addition of the points of compass and the correction of the name of the river, which the British called the Hosack. The point of view is British and thus "American Volunteers" means Tories: "Bodies of the Enemy" means Forces under Gen'l. Stark. The name "Walmscock" means Walloomsac.

now. Here must be erected an outwork if you will make your position thoroughly secure. This Baum also did.

He did more. He went below this fortified shoulder of the hill, and threw still another barricade a short distance up and down the river, on either side of the road near his end of the bridge. He did even more than that, for he was an able and conscientious soldier. Beyond the river, to the southeast, toward Bennington, on an eminence nearly a quarter of a mile from the bridge, yet other outworks were erected. At them, nearest Stark, the Tory Col. Pfister, as is believed, had the courage of his convictions to stand and to resist. With his convictions we are unable to agree, but we like him for this, that he seems to have taken command nearest the enemy, and that he shared death with Baum. Other outworks still Baum constructed, to the north of the road, well back from the bridge, and guarding his hill to the southwest, as the Tory Breastwork guarded it to the southeast. It was thus not only seasoned and brave veterans, the flower of Burgoyne's army, that Stark assailed that day, but it was such veterans thus elaborately fortified, on such a hill, and at such a point of strategic advantage.

To stand on that hilltop on an August day is a thing not to forget. The waving grain, the uncut grass, the clumps of underbrush, the trees along the river bank, the splendor of the mountains to the north and of the main range to the east, our own Bennington Hill with its graceful outlines and with its massive, clear-cut, grand gray monument beckoning toward you, and, finest of all, Bennington's own mountain, Mt. Anthony, rising commandingly and protectingly over the whole scene,—all this makes you feel that this battlefield, at least, was selected in Heaven. Not

from the Pyramids, as with Napoleon's army, but from Mt. Anthony, was all the past looking down that day to see whether the intrenched hosts would prove worthy foes, and whether that unique thing for which, as we shall see, Vermont stood, would have the insight to discern its hour on the dial plate of time, and the courage and the valor to make that hour deathless in human annals.

Yes, the Field of Bennington is its own battle plan, done in relief millenniums ago.

III. "WHAT WAS IT ALL ABOUT?"

But, as Peterkin and his small sister asked, while they rolled the soldier's skull along the garden walk at sunset, in Southey's poem, "After Blenheim,"—"What was it all about?"

It was about a superb European army, under a distinguished English General, Burgoyne, which, thus far, had swept everything before it. The expedition against Quebec had miserably failed. Crown Point had been yielded up. Ticonderoga, seized by our own Allen, now a prisoner of war, had, full though it was of rich stores, been evacuated without a struggle. Burgoyne had reached the Upper Hudson. His junction with Howe along the Lower Hudson seemed inevitable. Thus would be accomplished, in the cutting of New England off from the other states, what Sherman did, in the Civil War, for the South, when he marched from "Atlanta to the Sea." At the centre of operations near New York things had gone, if possible, even worse. The brilliance of Trenton and of Princeton had, indeed, relieved the gloom, but those battles then

seemed the superhuman but vain struggles of a drowning man.

Burgoyne had set aside his scruples, and had allied with himself the Indians, and their murderings and scalpings were of frequent occurence. Proclamations of large favors for espousing the English cause, and of dire penalties for not doing so, were scattered broadcast, and many were making haste to accept these offers; while, in the panic on all sides, the more secure Berkshire county, in Massachusetts, was filling with refugees whose consciences did not permit them to join the enemy.

The British flushed with success, the friends of America powerless in France to insure her good offices because the Revolution seemed on the verge of collapse, and men's hearts failing them everywhere,—this was "what it was all about."

There seem at this juncture to have been just two places in America where the possibility of American liberty burned in men's minds as a bright hope still, the camp of Washington, and the slopes of the mountains of Berkshire, of New Hampshire and of our own Bennington County.

Burgoyne, however, was to a certain extent a victim of his own success. His proclamations show that his head, which, both before this time and after it, lacked not reasonableness, was getting flighty. Moreover, he was moving southward, notwithstanding his abundance of captured stores, with almost no means for their transportation, so that his own army, though it had acquired so much, was often in straights for the commonest necessities.

There were large accumulations of stores at Bennington, and, what was far better, of horses, wagons and oxen. Ac-

quire these and he had but to march triumphantly on. Soon, therefore, all his energies were bent on the capture of Bennington. That was absolutely required by the logic of events, and he, most wisely, gave his whole heart to it. He fitted out the expedition under Baum with the greatest care. As Baum set forth he rode with him a considerable distance along the way to give him parting instructions, which were very minute. He expected Baum, when he had captured Bennington, to cross the mountains to Brattleboro, to pass south into Massachusetts, to take the Albany road, and to meet him in that town. He was so sure of success that he specified the exact number of horses which Baum was to dispatch to him as mounts for his cavalry, then going afoot.

IV. DYNAMICS OF A GREAT IDEA.

This neighborhood was settled mainly by "Separates"*; by men and women, that is to say, to whom the worldly and formal religion of the time in Connecticut and in Massachusetts, against which Whitfield preached and Edwards reasoned, was an offense, so that they formed themselves into "Separate" Churches in those colonies. It had, however, an exceedingly able and wise first minister, Parson Dewey, whose son Elijah, in fact,—and it is a significant circumstance,—commanded one of the Bennington Companies in the battle. Parson Dewey knew both how to adhere to conviction, and yet to recognize higher unities. Under a minister of such temper and caliber there were attracted

*Not the English "Separatists" of an earlier day, but churches which, in Massachusetts and Connecticut, withdrew from the regular churches, during and after the "Great Awakening," out of loyalty to its spiritual ideals. See Mr. Jennings' discussion of the subject in his History.

hither many persons of a less dogmatic temper, to the lasting good of the town as a whole, giving it conscience and intense moral earnestness and devotion, joined with tolerance and breadth of view, a rare combination, indeed, at that time or at any time.

A certain commanding influence thus came to Bennington, partly because of the weight and capacity of its citizens, and partly because of that which was the natural result of this, namely, their splendid public spirit.

Of such public spirit there was sore need, and constant and strenuous exercise. For, while the Dutch boundary of the Colony of New York on the east was substantially the same that it is to-day, an early English charter extended it to the Connecticut River. The contemporaneous English Administration was so lacking in penetration as to decide that the latter boundary was the correct one. Under this decision, lands in large tracts began to be sold all over Vermont, where, under prior grants from New Hampshire, modest tracts were being taken up by small landholders and were being admirably improved.

This was the gist of the famous Boundary Controversy. It was not merely a struggle about an imaginary line between two colonies, or about the title to more or fewer acres, but the issue underneath it all was between a system of large and often of absentee landed proprietors, and of small free landholders ; or, in other words, between the very idea underlying the New England conception of civil liberty, and the idea underlying the English conception of it at that time.

The settlers here, thus, had not only great force of mind and character, and a prosperity which these had rendered possible, but they had long been exercised by this peren-

nial struggle about landholding, until, perhaps no where in America at that time, did there exist a group of people so keenly and practically alive to the question of the fundamental meaning of the American Commonwealth.

Now there is nothing like the elevating and invigorating power of a great idea and of a religious idea, blended and practically applied ; and Bennington County at that epoch was a magnificant illustration of such power. For our people had such an idea. They not only had it, but, what is even more important, they lived it. They struggled and sacrificed for it. It was of the warp and woof of the tenure of their land, and of the stability of their families. This was why this County and its environs, and the Camp of General Washington, were about the only places, at that particular juncture, where the possibility of American liberty burned in men's minds as a bright hope still.

For the people here saw, with sure intuition, not only the rightfulness of their contention but its invincibleness. They had not held out against the tremendous odds of New York, year after year, for nothing. They had beaten that Commonwealth thus far, notwithstanding that they were so few and relatively weak, on the sheer rightfulness of their contention, and on their love and sacrifices for it ; and might they not confidently expect in like manner to withstand also even such an one as Burgoyne? Yes, they were sure of it. As it was with David from the sheepcotes, when the whole camp of Israel trembled before Goliath, so was it with the few and plain men of Bennington. There is no note among them anywhere to be found of their falling, even for a moment, under the then almost universal hopelessness. Bennington County at that crisis was, for the time, the real heart of the infant American Nation.

Hence the vast stores here accumulated. Hence the enunciation and application, here first,—though the example was soon widely copied,—of the principle of confiscating as traitorous the property of those going over to the enemy ; and this made the huge accumulation of stores the more practicable.

Our Council of Safety, and our leading men, like Seth Warner, thus, in the first place, caused there to be the possibility of a Battle of Bennington by this accumulation of stores here, so that the capture of Bennington became, for the time, Burgoyne's chief objective.

They also enlisted and drilled men, and spread the contagion of doing the same thing into the regions beyond them. No wonder that New Hampshire and Berkshire took fire when the frontier was thus leading the way. It thus, in the second place, came about, though numerically our Bennington men were much in the minority in the battle, that their course was a principal means of arousing and bringing hither the men from other states. Everywhere throughout all the states the cry arose, and generally vainly, for men to fill the depleted ranks of the army. But in Vermont this cry was not, as far too generally elsewhere, a hortative and an abstraction, but it was, the rather, a going forth to meet the near enemy, coupled with the winsome and irresistible appeal, " You will surely join us in so holy a cause ? "

Nor, let it be added, were our people wanting in a certain shrewd far-sightedness. Might Vermont hope ever to become an independent state ? Could the dominant weight and hostility of New York's influence in Congress against such a proposition ever be overcome ? How so well as by striking a blow that should win the praise even of its traditional enemy, and that should lay the whole Nation under its debt?

Yes, when the men of Bennington confronted that skillfully fortified and bravely manned hill, it was because Bennington's breadth of vision, cheerful hopefulness, and profound faith in a free commonwealth, had gathered the stores which Burgoyne felt were indispensable to the success of his campaign; it was because Bennington's forwardness in the cause had inspired its neighbors to join them in the common issue; it was because, to such earnest and eminently practical men, victory seemed inevitable; and it was with the high ulterior motive of laying the Nation under such admiration and gratitude as to win for Vermont, later, statehood and a civic life after its own heart. That was "what it was all about."

V. THE BATTLE.

Stark reached Manchester, from New Hampshire, on the seventh of August. He was there met by General Lincoln, bringing orders from General Schuyler, the Commander of the Armies of the Northern Department, to march to the Hudson. This Stark flatly refused to do. He based his refusal, formally, on his commission, which was only from New Hampshire, with instructions to act as he was about to do. But his real reason was, that he knew, as Schuyler and Lincoln did not,—and the men of Bennington had caused him to know it,—what Burgoyne's objective was, and would not suffer himself to be diverted to the Hudson. Had he done so the history of America would not improbably have proved entirely different.

On Saturday, the ninth, he reached Bennington, and encamped on the West Road, two miles from this spot.

There he was ceaselessly active, scouting, sending messengers in many directions, learning all he could about the enemy, and everything about the country,—for Seth Warner, who was a great hunter and fisherman, knew every rod of it,—and receiving recruits every day.

After four days so spent, namely, on Wednesday, the thirteenth, he sends forward two hundred men under Gregg to meet Baum's advance detachments. On Thursday, the fourteenth, he himself marches, meets Gregg on retreat, offers battle to Gregg's pursuers, and has it declined by Baum. He will not himself attack, for his position is unfavorable, and he wishes further to perfect his plans. Accordingly he falls back about a mile,* encamps, and, that night, at a council of war, he perfects them, and intends attacking in the morning, but heavy rains on Friday, the fifteenth, render that impracticable.

At daylight on the morning of Saturday, the "Sixteenth," which dawns clear and beautiful, adopting the principle of division practiced by Gideon in his overthrow of the Midianites, he sends one section of his force, under Herrick, to make a long circuit around Baum to the south and west, and another section, under Nichols, to make a similar circuit around him to the north and west; while Stark himself, with Bennington's own Seth Warner as chief adviser, knowing that the extent of the contemplated circuits will consume the time until the middle of the afternoon, employs his remaining men meanwhile in a series of noisy movements designed to convey to Baum and his men the impression that all his forces are at Baum's front, but that they are for some reason ineffective. This he does, as the

*Baum also fell back about the same distance, so that they lay about two miles apart. The point where they met on the fourteenth was almost or quite within the limits of Bennington, as Dea. Henry D. Hall understands it.

quaintly humorous phrase of the day has it, "to amuse them."

These plans work out with almost absolute precision. Nichols, from the northwest, and Herrick, from the southwest, effect a junction at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and assail Baum's rear and flanks, while Stark, from the east and southeast, ceases "to amuse," and begins to fight. The Tory Breastwork is stormed. The allied Indians, who know all too well the kind of marksmanship and valor they are now encountering, fall into single file and stealthily vanish. Many of the Tories and Canadian French also flee.

But not so Baum and his trusty troops. How it was that, notwithstanding these desertions, intrenched as he was, on so precipitous a hill, and having a fine battery and skillful gunners, he was not able to repel the assault, can only be explained by the impetuosity and fighting skill of Stark's men.

The death of John Fay contributed to the result far more than an ordinary like casualty might have been expected to do. He seems to have been a man greatly respected and loved. He was firing from behind a tree, only exposing so much of his head as was needful in taking aim. Thus exposed, what was not improbably equally skillful markmanship, sent a bullet into his forehead. The musket, which he was aiming, fell undischarged. His last words, as he lifted it to fire, were these: "I feel that I am fighting in a good cause." "John Fay is shot!" "John Fay is shot!" ran like a refrain through the Bennington Company to which he belonged, and his comrades, using that refrain as a sort of battle cry, abandoned cover, rushed for the breast-

works, and began that carnage inside them which could have but one ending.*

When the battle seemed over, and the exhausted men were performing after duties, or were resting, or were gathering the spoil, Breyman, with heavy reinforcements from Burgoyne, came suddenly up from the west, and attacked with such vigor that it looked for a time as if the victory might be short lived. But Seth Warner's men, who had been encamped at Manchester, and who had been summoned,—Warner himself, as has been noted, not being with them, but with Stark, acting as his chief adviser,—had marched through the heavy rain all the day before, had encamped near this village for the night, had spent the morning getting their rusted arms in order again, and had then started for the field. They arrived just at this juncture, reinspirited the men, and the battle was quickly turned into a second victory. Breyman's forces fled, hotly pursued, and, as Stark believed, were only prevented from capture by the timely intervention of darkness.

The main action lasted about two hours; its renewal continued as long as the men could see to fight. We had about thirty killed and about forty wounded. We captured

*The three northernmost gravestones in the front row in the old Burying Ground suggest an unrecorded tragedy. That in the centre marks the grave of John Fay. It states that he "fell fighting for the freedom of his country in the battle fought between Gen'l Stark and Col'l Baum, called Bennington Battle." No other name than that was known for the battle when this ancient stone, still clear in its beautiful simplicity, was cut. The stone next south is that of Mary Fay, the dead soldier's wife. The stone to the north marks the graves of Joseph and Hiram, children of John and Mary Fay. The dates of death, with the respective ages, follow:

John Fay, August 16, 1777, in his 43rd year.
Hiram Fay, August 24, 1777, 2 years, 4 months, 24 days.
Mary Fay, August 31, 1777, in her 39th year.
Joseph Fay, September 14, 1777, 5 years, 9 days.

What must have been the shock when the baby went in eight days, the wife in fifteen, and the five year old son in twenty-nine!

six hundred and fifty-eight prisoners, of whom thirty were officers, one hundred and fifty-five were Tories, and the remainder were mainly Hessians; and we left two hundred and seven of the enemy dead on the field. Four cannon, four ammunition wagons, twelve drums, two hundred and fifty sabres, and several hundred stand of arms, were also our trophies.

The praying that was being done throughout the day at Williamstown and at Bennington, the praying of the forces themselves,—for many among them were devoutly religious men,—and the almost unendurable suspense, yielded place, at evening, to thanksgivings, and to an overwhelming sense of relief and joy in this village, as the prisoners were brought in, and as the realization of the complete overthrow of so formidable an expedition, selecting its own field, admirably supported by artillery, and heavily intrenched, yet overcome by our homely and inadequately armed forces, broke upon the minds of all. Stephen Fay was preparing the body of his son for burial; the bodies of three others of our best Bennnington men,—namely, Henry Walbridge, Daniel Warner, and Nathan Clark,—were being cared for in their homes; and thus the joy of victory was subdued, and our Bennington of one hundred and twenty-six years ago, this night, fell asleep as in the presence of the dead and of its God.*

VI. WHOSE BATTLE WAS IT.?

The village of Hoosick Falls was placarded last week

*This sketch of the battle ought to have included some tribute to "Parson Allen," of Pittsfield, Mass. Of high character, of passionate devotion to his country, and of intrepid courage, his presence, as the "Fighting Parson," in the heart of the battle, cannot be estimated as a moral force. It helps explain the mystery of such an overwhelming victory amidst such difficulties.

with announcements of a function in celebration of the "Battle of Walloomsac."

Was there any village of Walloomsac when the battle was fought?

What was Baum fighting for but to get Bennington?

What was Stark fighting for but to defend Bennington?

Would it not have been a Battle of Bennington, beyond even Hoosick's challenge, if Stark had been willing to fight a defensive fight? Did it not get upon Hoosick's soil only because Stark went out to meet the enemy? Did not Stark, too, on August fourteenth, offer battle before Baum established himself upon his Hoosick fastness, and did not Baum decline it? Should such aggressiveness forfeit its name because it was thus aggressive?

You learn that your house is to be burglarized. You watch. You do not permit the thief to reach your doorstep. You encounter him in the middle of the street before your house. You offer him fight, then and there. He declines it. He falls back into your next neighbor's back yard. You follow. You fight. After a hard struggle you capture him, and turn him over to the police. Whose is that fight with a burglar? Is it your neighbors back yard's, because the burglar insisted that the fight should be there? Is it your neighbor's, because the back yard is owned by him? Is it not, the rather, your house's, because that was the house which was to have been burglarized? Nay, is it not yours, because it was you whose watchfulness, enterprise, courage and prowess faced the burglar, chased him, fought him, overcame him, and took him to prison?

It is pitiful to behold such blindness to the plainest facts, such grudging of an honor bought with blood, such willingness to impose on the ill informed and prejudiced, and,

above all, such ignorance of the profound meaning of events, among the most impressive in the whole history of America, out of which it came to pass that there ever was any Battle of Bennington at all.

There is one conclusive consideration that should hinder our neighbor town—it certainly would hinder most towns—from ever making such a claim. Colonel Pfister, who is believed to have commanded the Tory Breastwork, and whose thus getting nearest the enemy, and whose yielding up his life for his convictions along with Baum, have already received their meed of praise in this address, was a Hoosick man. His Tory company was in part recruited from Hoosick citizens.* Hoosick thus had, indeed, a part, and a conspicuous part, in the battle, and was beaten. But it is not the custom of the vanquished to celebrate the anniversary of their defeat.

VII. WHAT CAME OF THE BATTLE.

As a result of the Battle of Bennington not only did Burgoyne fail to seize supplies and means of transportation indispensable to the success of his campaign. The campaign itself, which was intended to cut off New England from the other states, received its death blow. It was with that campaign, after that, only a question of time.

Such a force as Baum led, so carefully selected, making so well planned and so well supported a movement, being intrenched on such a hill, and so strongly intrenched, hav-

* "We took four or five of my neighbors—two Sneiders and two Hornbecks. The bigger part of the Dutch Hoosac was in the battle against us."—Letter, written August 26, 1777, by Sergeant Joseph Rudd to his father; in the collection of relics made by Mr. George W. Robinson.

ing excellent artillery and gunners, and never for one moment wanting in courage, its leader yielding up his life and commanding the admiration of his conquerors,—by a force not superior in numbers, without artillery, almost without bayonets, in open daylight, and after nine hours' warning of some impending movement, however inexplicable, had been surrounded, assailed, and, with inconsiderable exceptions, killed, wounded or taken prisoners. What, then, might be expected when an adequate army, composed of just such men, should concentrate upon Burgoyne himself? He saw a great light. His head suddenly diminished to its wonted judicious size. He stopped writing bombastic proclamations. He perceived that he was doomed. The house still stands, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was held in honorable confinement, after his surrender, awaiting his return to England. In the Boston Public Library hangs the great parchment containing, in autograph, the parole of honor signed by himself and his officers. Bennington gave that Cambridge house its distinction. Bennington hung that parchment on the walls of the great Library.

As, after Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the Union had friends in plenty beyond the Atlantic, so, after Bennington, the Revolution had friends in plenty there also. The Treaty with France was concluded. Arms, ammunition and men from that country, no longer covertly and sparingly, but openly and plentifully, arrived. The Tories cooled off. The French Canadians grew shy. The Indians, with their never failing instinct of peril, ceased to be a factor in the struggle. The opponents of George III.'s policy, in England, were wonderfully strengthened. The debates in the House of Commons warmed. The tone even

of the ministry and of the King changed and grew conciliatory. Earlier, this might have helped them, but it was now too late.

In America, in the room of almost universal despair, there were now hope, expectation, confidence, everywhere. Men perceived that it was, indeed, still a long and dark and painful way, but that, after Bennington, there could be but one ending of the struggle.

Thus, though pomp and circumstance were wanting, though it was not a great battle numerically, though it was only a plain and modest deed of plain and modest men, it is not too much to say, that the Battle of Bennington insured the success of the American Revolution, and became one of the great decisive battles of history.

The consciousness of Bennington has been always alive to the profound significance of its battle. And the consciousness of a people, handed down through the generations far more accurately than oral tradition, is ever a most impressive witness to a great reality. Bennington has always remembered the anniversary day, and often with imposing commemoration. Moreover, while the participants in the battle, or while those who knew them, were yet alive, it began, through its enthusiastic and painstaking antiquarians and historians, the collection and preservation of the facts and memorials of the struggle, so that this battle is able to be studied and known in its details as are few great battles of so long ago.

Will it be invidious if I mention three, of several, among the dead who merit the very especial gratitude of all the future for their assiduous and fruitful labors in this direction? They are, George W. Robinson, Isaac Jennings,

prietors, and of and for a simple freedom under which there might be real homes, and under which the individual might best develop, lit, as with a lambent flame, all America that day, because it had emancipated and transfigured the men of the New Hampshire Grants. Other men, almost everywhere, expected defeat. But there was no man of Bennington County, whom this great idea had possessed, and who had battled successfully for it during those difficult, triumphant years of the boundary controversy, who did not know in his heart of hearts that Vermont's cause and America's cause were secure and invincible.

But is not the supreme meaning, that of the sustaining and vitalizing and inspiring nature of religion? For it was religion that brought the "Separates" here. It was religion, conceived in larger terms by Parson Dewey than by some of his brethren,—in terms, that is to say, of tolerance and of comprehensiveness,—that attracted hither men

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that it has never, in any material respect, been found in error. His pamphlet in favor of a shaft, rather than of statuary, for the monument, written in his ninetieth year, is not only a masterful argument, but is a most impressive illustration of how the battle laid hold on the consciousness of the generation born soon after its occurrence. That consciousness, as the writer has pointed out in the text of the address, is of itself monumental and interpretive.

To Dea. Henry Davis Hall (1823-), of North Bennington, son of Governor Hall, associate and colaborer with his father, and continuator of his father's work, who perhaps knows more about the details of the Battle of Bennington, and especially from original sources, than any other living man, the writer desires here to record his indebtedness for generous assistance in the preparation of this address. Dea. Hall's maternal grandfather, Henry Davis, was in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

[Dea. Henry D. Hall died Dec. 15, 1903, as this address was passing through the press—a noble, true soul entering into the great life.]

To Mr. Charles Miller Bliss, whose labors in behalf of the monument, and as a shaft rather than as statuary, were indefatigable, the writer desires here, also, to record his indebtedness for information regarding the determination of the character of the design and for other suggestions.

The obligation of all the future to other students of the battle, and workers for the monument, might well be added; but fall outside the scope of this address, and of its appended notes.

of brains and of many minds, until Bennington became noted for its solid, wise, enlightened citizens. Moreover, this was a devout and praying place, and it was on the arms of faith in a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God, that Nichols and Herrick and Warner and Stark and their men were swept up the steep sides of Battle Hill, over the breastworks, and to victory.

Yes, friends, isolated, beautiful, simple, hardy, sacrificial living, and a great, emancipating, constructive idea, and the power of a profound, broad-minded, inclusive religious faith, are the primary meanings of yonder magnificent battle shaft, and of Bennington's pivotal day in human history.

Will you and I, from this anniversary night henceforth, ever allow ourselves to be unreceptive and unresponsive to them?

ADDENDUM.

The matter of (pages 4 and 14) Gen'l Stark's disobeying orders has been authoritatively stated many times. Since this address was in type my attention has been drawn to facts brought out in a speech by a Vermont Representative in Congress, William W. Grout, in the Congressional Record of Dec. 21, 1894, which puts the matter in quite another light. The facts seem to be these:

Gen'l Stark did *not refuse* to obey Gen'l Schuyler, and Gen'l Lincoln wrote to Gen'l Schuyler immediately after he had seen Gen'l Stark that he did not know what Gen'l Stark was going to do. Stark came on to Bennington with the intention of obeying Schuyler but the Council of Safety explained the situation to him and were unwilling to allow the Vermont troops to march to the Hudson. Stark acquiesced in the decision. He explains this in a letter to the Connecticut Courant of that period.

Congress never came to the point of censuring Gen'l Stark (page 4) but did pass a vote of censure upon New Hampshire for the authority given to Gen'l Stark.

A certain free hand, however, seems to have been exercised by Gen'l Stark, which is the point especially emphasized in the text of the address.

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